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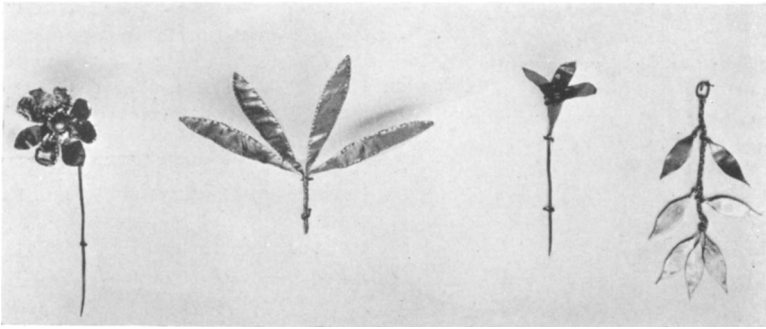


FIG. 1. GOLD JEWELRY FROM MOCHLOS

CRETAN REPRODUCTIONS

A NUMBER of Cretan reproductions recently purchased have been included in the Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition as special features. They are shown in Case H 2 in the First Classical Room and illustrate in a striking way the many-sidedness of Cretan art. They are the work of M. E. Gilliéron of Athens, with whose help we have been able to build up our now important collection of such copies.

The most interesting of this new lot is undoubtedly the copy of the famous ivory figure from Knossos (about 1600-1500 B. C., fig. 2), conceived apparently as a leaper in a bull-fighting scene such as that represented in the fresco No. 40. In its fresh sense of life and movement and in its fine appreciation of the liveness and delicacy of the human form it is almost Greek, and shows perhaps better than any other product of the time the essential kinship between Crete and Greece. Several of these figures were found together, in a very precarious state of preservation, and were only saved from complete decomposition by timely soaking in melted wax and paraffin. The one here shown is the best preserved. From another example we know that the holes in the head served for the attachment of long locks of hair in gold plated bronze; the streaming hair must have added greatly to the lifelike effect of the whole.

The little painted terracotta figures from Petsofa, placed on the middle shelf, are more roughly worked but valuable for

what they teach us of Cretan costumes (fig. 3). The wide skirts, the open jackets, the Medici collars, the "plate hats," all strike us with that curious modernity, the element that so often confronts us in the study of this far-away civilization. The statuettes were found in what was probably a shrine and were evidently votive offerings. The separate arms found with the figures can only be explained as such. The group is about contemporary with the Knossos snake goddess, that is, it belongs to the end of the Middle Minoan period (about 1800-1600 B. C.).

Among the most interesting discoveries in Crete were the three steatite cups decorated with reliefs found at Hagia Triada. The Harvester vase and the Boxer vase we have long had represented in our collection. Now we are able to show a copy of the third, the so-called "Chieftain cup." The decoration is less elaborate than on the two other examples, there being only five figures—a chieftain into whose august presence an officer, with his train of three men, has just been admitted. The soldiers are almost hidden behind their large shields of hide; the officer stands at attention; the chieftain's proud bearing marks him out as the ruler of the clan. The individualization is remarkable and gives to the figures an uncommon interest. The Cretan artist indeed shows himself here in a fresh light—not with the exuberant love for movement and life so evident in the Harvester and Boxer vases, but in a quieter mood, in which he produced scenes full of charm and subtle characterization.

A small fragment of another steatite vase suggests a work of a similar nature. Youths are represented walking with chests thrown back in a solemn procession, evidently bearing offerings to a shrine, of which remains are seen above. The original was found at Knossos.

A bronze basin, also from Knossos, is one of the finest products in that material found in Crete. The form—a large flat bowl with arched handle—is elegant, and the lily border on the rim is both carefully worked and effective. The whole has a good deal of style. A basin of this shape is figured on an inscribed tablet with a handsome ewer standing in it, so that we must imagine this example also as having once formed part of such a set. With it were indeed found a ewer and other basins, and the ewer, it is interesting to note, is of the same shape as one of those carried by the Keftians, the Minoan ambassadors, represented as bearing offerings in the Egyptian tombs. We can appreciate that such fine metal vases must have been welcome gifts to discriminating Pharaohs.

The palace of Knossos has taught us the magnificence of Cretan court life. The ruins of the little towns of Gournia and Palaikastro tell a very different story of the conditions in which lived the humbler people. Their quarters were as simple as those of their masters were splendid and spacious. Our knowledge derived from such ruins is supplemented by an interesting series of glazed terracotta plaques, showing façades of houses. Reproductions of these are shown on the deck of the case. The originals were found at Knossos, and probably once served as inlay of a casket. The houses depicted are generally two stories high with several windows and flat roofs. They are evidently of wood and plaster construction with beams placed lengthwise and crosswise. The use of color gives them a pleasing appearance; but the design is very simple and unpretentious, not unlike, in fact, the provincial houses of modern Greece.

In our persistent belief that the people of ancient times led primitive lives, we are continually having surprises. After we

had got used to the fact that in 1500 B. C. there was an advanced civilization in Crete, with luxuries, comforts, and a keen appreciation of art, we thought that at least during the preceding periods life must have been rude and primitive. Mr. Seager's discoveries at Mochlos have made us revise our estimate; for he found in that little island a profusion of gold jewelry and of finely worked stone vases belonging to the Early Minoan II period (about 2500 B. C.), which point to a state



FIG. 2. IVORY LEAPER
FROM KNOSSOS

of prosperity and to the possession of efficient tools. A selection of the Mochlos jewelry is here shown in finely worked copies (fig. 1). They consist of hairpins in the shape of daisies and crocuses and sprays of leaves, of plain bands, delicate chains, and pendants, not as a rule of very fine workmanship, it is true, but displaying the same charming naturalism which characterizes later Cretan work. And if the people of this small settlement could boast of such an abundance of precious ornaments, what must the dwellers in the larger cities have owned?

On the same site and belonging to the same period was found a steatite lid with handle in the form of a dog. Of this, too,

we have been able to acquire a reproduction. Again, the modeling is not detailed, but in spite of its comparative crudeness it shows good observation of essentials and marked decorative feeling. It is interesting to note that the breed of dog here represented—long-legged and crop-eared—can still be seen in Cretan villages today,



FIG. 3. TERRACOTTA FIGURE
FROM PETSOFA

having persisted apparently through more than four thousand years.

These finds—the jewelry and the stone lid—give us glimpses into an entirely new world—Crete not of the second but of the third millennium B. C. We can only hope that future discoveries will help us to know this period better; for it too was, it would seem, an epoch in which there was an appreciation and sense for beauty, and which must have made a contribution to our artistic stock which we cannot afford to lose.

G. M. A. R.

CHANGES IN THE JAPANESE ARMOR HALL

THE hall of Japanese armor aims to illustrate the development of arms and armor from the earliest times to the period Meiji (1868). But as space is limited, we can now exhibit only our choicest objects; in fact, when new material is secured, we must make far-reaching changes in order to exhibit it. Thus the accessions of 1917, collected in Japan by the curator, thanks largely to a fund donated anonymously by a trustee of the Museum, have caused the rearrangement of many of our cases, since we have now filled gaps in our series, especially in representing the art of the armorer during the ancient period of Japan, let us say up to the seventh century A. D.¹

As one now enters the Japanese armor hall from the main, or Riggs gallery, he finds on his left a case containing early Japanese swords. These were collected from tumuli, mainly in the central provinces: they represent forms which, with rarest exceptions, have hitherto been seen only in the national collections of Japan. And for this there has been an excellent reason, since all materials of this kind were from burial mounds and belonged to the revered ancestors of the Japanese, especially to their divine imperial family, whose tumuli are known by the score. Hence they were not to be disturbed inadvisedly or lightly; and, if explored at all, they were inspected only by governmental experts, who are bound to reserve all materials for the imperial museums, and, tending to this end, make them contraband and inexportable. The presence, therefore, in a foreign museum of even half a dozen more or less complete swords of the peculiar bulbous-pommeled type, with ovate wheel-like guards, is at once worthy of mention. Moreover, our specimens are good ones, and in three of them the scabbard mountings are preserved. With these is shown a carefully prepared restoration of one of these swords, made by the well-known artist Sarakatsu Gassan after a specimen,

¹Cf. Bull. Met. Mus. Art, vol. XII (1917), p. 233.